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UTILIZING TEXT SETS TO TEACH CRITICAL LITERACY:  
Bringing Literacy into the Social Studies Middle School Classroom

by

Brenna C. Balkus

A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Masters of Literacy Education.

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

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Capstone Project Facilitator: Patty Born Selly  
Content Experts: Jon Kahle & Robin Percival  
Peer Reviewers: Lindsey Patterson & Kirsten Pinkerton

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## DEDICATION

To my family who has always supported my education and stood behind me on this adventure. To Janet, for always being my cheerleader and sounding interested in whatever I was talking about, even if you did not understand it. Thank you to Jon, for not only being an awesome professor, but the best content advisor I could ask for to help me with this project. My text set writing group, Lindsey and Kirsten, thank you for taking hours to pour over every word, comma, and bowl of queso that it took to create this project. And finally, thank you to my cohort ladies, my brunch buddies. In you I have found my fellow teachers, and more importantly, friends, who love to talk everything literacy, chat about life, and share in a lot of laughs!

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Finally Finding the Right Words

#### Overview of Capstone Inquiry

Literacy is built into social studies in every way. In order to analyze a society and how it interacts with the world, a person needs to be able to comprehend many different kinds of text. Researchers, Evans and Clark (2015) or Soares and Wood (2010) for example, have aligned social studies and reading for decades, which will be further elaborated in Chapter Two. Specifically, the social studies student needs to be able to comprehend different types of materials in order to perceive and evaluate different viewpoints of an event or situation (Soares & Wood, 2010). The ability for the reader to make that analysis and apply it to their own place in society takes the idea of multiple perspectives a step deeper, closer to critical literacy.

The intersection of social studies and reading leads to my question: *How can text sets be used in a middle school social studies classroom to teach critical literacy?* The purpose of this project is to create a text set to teach critical literacy in the social studies classroom and help bridge the gap between literacy and social studies. The project is intended for sixth grade teachers, who teach social studies in Minnesota. At this point in the project, a text set is defined as a set of texts grouped around a specific theme (Bersh, 2013). A text set and its definition will be looked at in more depth in Chapter Two.

This chapter describes how the research question was chosen and settled upon, as well as explaining who the stakeholders are and who could use this project in their classrooms. In addition, outside stakeholders and how this project may be beneficial for

educators outside of my school will be explained. Then the rationale and context for the project will be given. To begin, I will share my journey to my capstone question.

### **My Journey to Capstone Question**

Reading has always been a passion of mine because it allowed me to journey to other places, meet new people, learn about far away lands, and go on adventures that were just not feasible while sitting in my inner city home in a large urban area in the Upper Midwest. When I was a child in school many of my teachers commented at parent-teacher conferences about my love of reading, along with my desire to help my peers. They noticed how hard it was for me to put a book down and move on to the next activity. At the same time, my teachers commented on my drive to help everyone in the classroom, as I did not want to see anyone left behind. Stories allowed me to connect with others and taught me many lessons in life.

The stories I was reading gave me a chance to learn about the differences and the many similarities of people who lived around the world. While reading *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett (1911), I learned the power of hope. *Night* by Elie Wiesel (1960) was a story different from mine in almost every way; and yet, I was able to connect to the idea of perseverance and that in life there are times you just keep moving forward with the belief that it will get better. *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi (2000) was one of the first graphic novels I ever read. It opened my eyes to life in Iran after the Islamic Revolution. It was the little moments when Marjane was just a girl who did not understand the politics or why everything was changing that made her story stay with me. Reading became a way for me to learn to connect with people, both similar to me and



those who were totally different than myself. It was through their stories I saw a new way to view my world, beyond the scope my inner city neighborhood provided.

Attending inner city schools gave me a unique perspective at a young age. Most of my peers qualified for free or reduced lunch and were students of color. Many of my classmates came from single parent households, with parents who worked multiple jobs to make ends meet. While sitting in my middle and high school classrooms, I was often the only Caucasian student, and yet, almost all of the resources in our classrooms only showed my white perspective. How did that make my classmates feel? Where were the characters and conversations that they would identify with?

Even at that age I knew something was missing, and it was something big. As the only Caucasian student in the classroom, would it not benefit me to be exposed to books and resources that showed my classmates' experiences? Why should I only see myself and not my peers' perspective in our class books and curriculum? Large pieces of the puzzle were being left out and ignored. I was far from having the vocabulary to describe it, or even a real understanding of what was happening; but what I could pinpoint was that in almost every book or text that was presented, the people looked like me instead of the twenty plus students sitting next to me, and that just did not seem fair.

Choosing a career path in teaching was an easy choice when the time came. It was not a surprise to any of my former teachers or peers to hear I was going into education. Being an educator combined my desire to help people that had been brewing since elementary school with a love of learning. Social studies fed my love for history and geography and the desire to share that with my students. Being interested in the world around me, questioning what was happening, and learning about new places and people is

also passion of mine. Years later in my graduate studies I would learn these are all a part of critical literacy. Igniting this same passion in my students is one of my primary goals as a teacher. My goal is to excite my students to learn things like how people celebrate holidays across the globe, how teens in other countries face similar issues as themselves, or how current events impact their own lives.

Reading is an important part of my life, and an essential skill to be successful in our society, and yet, many of my students only saw reading as a chore, mostly because they were not confident in their skills. The only reading they engaged in was what they were forced to read. I saw this first hand while working at a for-profit tutoring center in 2012-2014. This is when a new interest in education emerged for me -- teaching reading. Working with students of all ages, from beginning readers on their letter sounds to advanced readers practicing complex reading strategies for the ACT test became some of my favorite lessons to teach. In my tutoring sessions, I thought there had to be a better way to build reading skills, and I wanted to be a part of the change. That was when I decided to go back to school and get my Kindergarten - 12th grade Reading License.

In my reading license classes at Hamline University in 2013-2014, a match was ignited in me. My true path in teaching was laid out before me. In each class my excitement grew by what I was learning about education and what an engaging classroom could look like for students. The conversation was continually about the need for reading strategies, like critical literacy, to be taught in content classes, for instance, social studies. It was an idea that took a deep hold for me and did not let go. Most of my projects and papers were focused around the idea of bringing reading strategies, such as critical literacy, into the social studies classroom.

A similar feeling started to creep into the back of my mind in 2014 when I was hired at my first social studies teaching job. It was an idea that had taken root years before when as student sitting at my desk in high school, only this time I was the teacher. The curriculum being handed to me to teach lacked two things: a focus on reading strategies and a focus on bringing in alternative perspectives. This time, instead of wondering how my fellow classmates felt to not see themselves in the curriculum or conversations, it was my turn to ask the question as the teacher.

As a teacher, it became clear that my students were not reading their social studies texts to understand, but to fact find: reading just to hunt out what they have been taught is the “important” information. Fact finding should not be the majority of reading in a classroom as Morrow and Gambrell (2011) point out, “To be downplayed are activities such as writing solely to demonstrate knowledge of conventions or reading to successfully answer a set of comprehension questions” (p.45). There is a place for reading the material and looking for specific information, but it is not the only type of reading that should be done in a classroom.

My students’ understanding of reading in social studies was to just read until they came across a name or date to write down in their notebook for the next test that they assumed would be filled with low level, in-text questions. As a new social studies teacher, the help from the more seasoned teachers was lacking, many shrugged their shoulders, muttered something under their breath, and walked away quickly when I asked the question of how to overcome this problem. I had strategies and approaches to help my students engage with the text in a different way, but still struggled with how to engage my students with them. As an educator I was starting to feel at a loss of what to

do. I was still left with my original question that I did not have a solution for, knowing there was a problem with my students not seeing themselves in the curriculum.

In addition to this problem, now a secondary issue was brewing, students only reading their social studies texts superficially. My students did not see the benefit of digging deep into the material, they only skimmed for what they considered the important information, the highlights they would find on the next multiple choice unit test. Most of my students did not ever spend long enough in their texts to realize there was not more than one perspective being shown to them. There had to be a way to address the problem of representation in texts within quality literacy instruction in their social studies content.

In 2017, during my Masters of Literacy Education coursework at Hamline University the answer to the issues that had been plaguing me since high school and in my early years as a teacher were answered. The first answer came in the form of critical literacy. Paulo Freire's (1970) idea of looking beyond the text to see the power structures, the voices present, and what was missing, would provide the framework for all students in the classroom to be represented and have a voice (McLaughlin, 2004). It was closely followed by using text sets as a way to bring literacy into the content areas to build engagement, deepen understanding, and provide authentic reading opportunities for all readers (Nichols, 2009). There was finally a way to describe the problems in my curriculum and I had two frameworks to begin to use together to work to make change! This led me directly to my capstone question: *How can text sets be used in a middle school social studies classroom to teach critical literacy?*

**Professional Context**

I have been a secondary social studies teacher at a Kindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade online school for five years. At the time of this writing, I am in my third year teaching sixth grade social studies and also teaching a section of high school students. The social studies department at the school is elementary through high school. There is one elementary representative, who teaches multiple subjects, but the rest of the department teachers, middle and high school teachers, are only responsible for social studies classes. Currently, there are twelve teachers in our department. One elementary representative, as stated, four teachers for middle school, and seven teachers dedicated high school. All middle school teachers also teach at least one section of a high school course as well.

Through my journey, my goal had become clear; to help eliminate the question of “how?” from the question of bringing literacy into the social studies content area is brought up. My aim was to create a project that will combine literacy and social studies together by using text sets and a critical literacy framework to support cross curricular teaching and goals. It was also my goal to create a project that would help my students feel represented in the curriculum. Along with that representation, I wanted to build a project that would challenge them to engage with multiple texts, through the use of text sets, in a way that would help them to read for understanding rather than fact finding. It is my intention and hope that through the use the text sets and critical literacy, students will create meaning from multiple texts and perspectives to achieve mastery of the social studies and literacy for social studies standards.

**Potential Importance of the Capstone Question**

This project will be most helpful for teachers in Minnesota who teach the sixth

grade social studies standards. There is a comprehensive textbook to address the state standards for social studies at sixth grade and extensive resources on the state's Historical Society's website. Neither of these have a list available for teachers to review and find grade appropriate outside resources of various formats and reading levels or explicit examples of how to use reading strategies with what resources are available. A project like this will begin to create a place for teachers to find other resources to use in their classrooms and see how to weave them with literacy strategies into their daily lessons.

There are many other people who can also learn from this project and find ideas to help their own teaching and professional development. Other social studies teachers who are teaching grades besides sixth grade will be able to see how to develop text sets for their students to investigate within a unit. Teachers, not only social studies teachers, will be able to glean an understanding of what a text set is and how they can be used in a classroom. This project will also model how to use critical literacy in a single unit or theme in the social studies classroom, which may be beneficial for social studies teachers at any level. Critical literacy will be highlighted on in Chapter Two.

Other stakeholders could use a project of this nature to help support a proposal to purchase new resources, like books or other media resources, for teachers to use in their classrooms alongside the main curriculum. A teacher could present this project as an example of how resources purchased by a parent group or grant could be used to enhance student engagement and work toward building literacy goals in content area lessons. Finally, literacy coaches could use this project as a model and a conversation starter when working with social studies departments in strengthening and evaluating their literacy practices within their classrooms.

## **Outline of the Rest of the Capstone**

Chapter One outlined the overview of the research question the project is based on: *How can text sets be used in a middle school social studies classroom to teach critical literacy?* It also laid out the rationale behind the research question, provided a context for the project, looked at the potential importance of the capstone question, the stakeholders of the project and the project's significance to me.

In Chapter Two, the literature and research of the three main themes of the project will be reviewed. An overview of each theme that is important to answering the research question integrating literacy into the social studies, text sets, and critical literacy will be provided. Chapter Three will describe the project in more detail including the intended audience, the context, the framework used, the timeline for the project, and an overview of the final product. Then Chapter Four will summarize the project and my reflections.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Review of the Literature**

Learning to read is a fundamental part of being a student. It is a skill that is used throughout the school day. Every class asks students to read text in a different way; Shanahan & Shanahan (2008) describe how “teachers use slightly different strategies for reading in their disciplines than they use for reading outside their disciplines” (as cited in Gilles, Wang, Smith, & Johnson, p. 42). The way people read changes throughout the day depending on what task is being asked of them. Social studies teachers ask students to look at a variety of sources to make meaning about themselves and the world around them (Afflerbach & VanSledright, 2001). The implementation of the Common Core state standards (CCSS) in 2010 changed what is asked of teachers in many ways. Social studies and science teachers, for example, have literacy standards they are expected to incorporate into their classroom lessons that support the idea of using multiple sources of information to make meaning.

This chapter will begin by looking at literacy in the social studies classroom. It will investigate the research behind the changes CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2018) has brought to the social studies classroom, teachers reluctant to bring literacy strategies into their lessons, and the benefits that bringing reading strategies into the social studies classroom can have for students and teachers. Next, the chapter will discuss text sets and the role they can have in building literacy into the social studies classroom. This section will focus on defining a text set, the benefits they bring to the classroom, and ways they can be used to scaffold text and teach strategies. Finally, this chapter will explore critical literacy as a framework to use with text sets. That section will define critical literacy,



distinguish it from critical thinking, describe what it looks like, and explain why critical literacy should be used in a social studies classroom. The review of literature about these themes will work to develop the background to the research question for this project:

*How can text sets be used in a middle school social studies classroom to teach critical literacy?*

### **Literacy in Social Studies and the Connection to Common Core State Standards**

Reading is a skill that is required in every content area (Gunning, 2003). In the area of social studies, students are asked to read and comprehend a variety of sources, such as primary and secondary sources, and then summarize, evaluate, and synthesize the information. There are explicit standards addressing literacy being taught in the social studies classroom (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2018). This section will investigate the CCSS's implementation of literacy into the content areas, specifically social studies. It will examine why social studies teachers are reluctant to bring literacy strategies into their classrooms, as well as give an overview of what reading strategies can bring to the social studies.

Students do not see a social studies classroom as a place to use the skills and strategies taught in Language Arts, the idea of transferring those skills is lost unless students are explicitly reminded (Gunning, 2003). It is imperative that teachers help make these connections between social studies and literacy for students, in order to set students up for success once they leave school. With the adoption of the CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2018) there has been a shift to make sure that students are college and career ready by the time they graduate. According to The American College Test (ACT)

(2007) standards were developed to rectify the gap that was growing, showing students did not know how to comprehend complex text.

Evans and Clark (2015) go on to say, “The CCSS emphasize nonfiction reading and writing across the content areas, including the ability to analyze text and form evidence-based propositions and arguments” (p. 1). With the focus shifting to encouraging deeper reading of a variety of texts in the content areas, it is believed students will be more prepared for the complex reading and writing they will be faced with after graduation. Brown and Gooden (2014), who write about implementing the CCSS in a social studies classroom state, “Implementation of the Common Core requires students to be actively engaged in the work of analyzing text and interpreting it” (p.46). With the adoption of CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2018), surface reading of a text in any class is no longer acceptable.

The CCSS directly call out science and social studies as reading classrooms, with their emphasis on literacy standards for both content areas. The National Governors Association and Council of Chief School Officers assert,

Specific standards have been identified for literacy in history/social studies instruction in grades 6-12 . . . meaning that middle and high school social studies teachers must incorporate content reading and specific literacy practices for facilitating student use and understanding of social studies text. (as cited by Swanson et al., 2016, p. 143)

Content teachers have been challenged to change and adapt the way they view their own classrooms as well as the way they approach their subject areas.

The CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2018) have changed the question from *Are we going to teach reading strategies in our social studies classrooms?* to *How are we going to teach reading strategies in our social studies classrooms?* and *What is best practice when building reading strategies into social studies classrooms?* These questions are not easy to answer, but the literacy standards assigned to History and Social Studies start to give a road map for how to answer them. The literacy standards for History and Social Studies, grades 6-8, are broken up into four categories: Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, and Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity (Gilles et al., 2013). Each category builds on the next, in growing level of complexity to create meaning. The first, Key Ideas and Details asks students to create basic meaning from the text, but by the third category, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, students are using a variety of sources together to create and support meaning. Each category will be looked at in detail to follow.

**Key ideas and details.** There are three Common Core standards in this category. They are focused around the students' ability to cite specific textual evidence when analyzing sources, determine the central idea of a source, and identify key steps in a text's description of a process (National Governors Association & Council of Chief School Officers, 2018). All three of these standards ask students to dig into the actual text and make meaning. The meaning that is created is based within the text, not pulling outside information in to understand it. For example, these standards ask students to summarize the main points of a source and cite specifically where in the text they got their ideas from when discussing it or writing about it.

**Craft and structure.** The three standards in this section focus on evaluating how the text being used is set up and developed. They ask students to decide what words mean, how the text presents main ideas to the reader, and the author's point of view (National Governors Association & Council of Chief School Officers, 2018). These standards are less about what the text says, but how the message is delivered. Students are asked to think about choices the author makes about word choice and the structure of the piece, and from those inferences about the text's construction students deepen their understanding of the overall text.

**Integration of knowledge and ideas.** This set of three standards begin to ask the students to look beyond the text to interpret it for meaning. They ask students to make meaning from different types of texts (visual texts, like photos and videos specifically), distinguish between fact, opinion, and reasoned judgement, and analyze primary and secondary sources from the same topic (National Governors Association & Council of Chief School Officers, 2018). These standards ask the students to use multiple texts together to understand a theme or see how they all fit together. The skills in these standards continue to get farther away from one specific text to make meaning. These standards ask students to use multiple texts of different types to create meaning and be able to support their ideas.

**Range of reading and level of text complexity.** The last category of literacy standards for social studies is one standard that states, "by the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently" (National Governors Association & Council of Chief School Officers, 2018, English Language Arts Standards>>History/Social

Studies>>Grade 6-8, Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity, ¶ 1). This last standard demands that students read complex text at grade level by the end of eighth grade, but the data shows that is not happening. As of 2016, 75% of eighth graders in America read below grade level (Berkeley, King-Sears, Vilbas & Conklin, 2016). According to Alvermann (2002), less than three percent of eighth graders can analyze and understand the text they are given to read. The standards say, however, that by the end of the eighth grade students should be reading social studies texts on grade level and be able to create meaning from them.

Middle school is a time of transition for students, including in the area of reading, they move from the mindset of learning how to read, to using reading to think on a higher level. Gilles et al. (2013) state, “The middle grades are often a time when students transition from learning the basics of reading in elementary school to using literacy skills to access and refine more sophisticated thinking” (p. 35). This standard ensures that teachers, including content area teachers, are working to help students through this transition and understand more complex texts by the time students start ninth grade. Figure 1 in the Appendix list the CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2018) standards for history/social studies, grades 6-8.

These standards are used by teachers when planning lessons and instructing students in order to guarantee age appropriate and rigorous content is being covered. However, many social studies teachers find it challenging to effectively incorporate reading strategies into their daily strategies for many reasons, which will be reviewed next.

## **Reluctant Teachers**

The CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2018) are clear in their demand for literacy to enter into the content areas, particularly the social studies, and yet teachers hold back from implementing reading strategies in their lessons. There have been many studies examining the idea that social studies teachers understand the importance of teaching reading strategies in their classrooms, but do not because they lack the confidence in their ability to do it well. In their study of middle school teachers and their perception of literacy in all classrooms, Mallette, Henk, Waggoner, and Delaney (2005) found that while many teachers across the content areas have come to believe in the importance of literacy instruction in all classrooms, those same teachers lack the confidence to implement quality literacy instruction practices to engage students. More specifically, social studies teachers know that the incorporation of literacy strategies is important, where they struggle is inadequate amount of resources and confidence in teaching these strategies (Gilles et al., 2013). Without the confidence or the resources to implement literacy into their lessons, social studies teachers will continue to teach what is comfortable, and focus on the content.

In their article, Evans and Clark (2015) discuss five major contributions they see for why teachers are hesitant to embrace literacy in the social studies classroom. As previously discussed, many teachers do not feel confident in implementing literacy strategies into their lessons or do not have access to adequate resources to allow them to bring them into their classroom easily. The other factors discussed in the article are social studies teachers do not believe there is enough time to teach the strategies, they struggle to understand how teaching the reading strategies will help their students

understand the subject material, and they assume the students come into their classroom already knowing the literacy skills needed.

As a result of feeling trapped by time constraints and a lack of confidence in teaching literacy strategies, social studies teachers look to other methods, besides reading, to present content to their students. Greenleaf, Jimenez, and Roller (2002) describe it as:

Students in the urban schools where I work with teachers are often not expected to read these texts anymore. Instead, reading and interpreting texts or spoon-feeding curriculum material is often done for students who are frequently not given the support they need to develop fluency and strategic reading approaches for grappling with these texts in order to become more independent learners. (p. 488)

They go on to explain that teachers often fall back on these approaches because they feel ill-equipped to help their students read the text. Rather than asking their students to read the material and create their own meaning, social studies teachers find it easier to hand the main points out or go over them through lecture. As previously discussed, it is not always a matter of the social studies teacher not wanting to teach their students how to do this meaning-making for themselves, but that they do not have the resources or belief that they know how. This idea gets to one of the main goals and purposes of the research question of this Capstone project, *How can text sets be used in a middle school social studies classroom to teach critical literacy?* Providing a framework like critical literacy for social studies teachers to use with text sets can help build teachers' confidence in building reading strategies into the social studies classroom.

A breakdown in instruction happens when social studies teachers see the need for literacy instruction, but do not feel the need to teach it or believe they have the ability to

teach it successfully. The literacy standards for History/Social Studies in the CCSS addressed the question of whether literacy needs to be in the social studies classroom, what is left to be addressed by schools and districts is the mindset that social studies teachers do not feel confident in their abilities to teach literacy strategies (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2018).

Researchers Swanson et al. (2016) agree that a shift needs to happen with social studies teachers' self-efficacy. It is not enough to see themselves as content teachers or change to see themselves as English teachers, but they need to see themselves as teachers who are teaching a variety of strategies to help their students be successful. "History-social science teachers should not view themselves as English support teachers, but co-teachers working towards a particular goal-purposeful instruction" (Brown & Gooden, 2014, p. 43) Social studies teachers can become co-teachers by using critical literacy in their classrooms.

One way of making the the content more meaningful for students is helping them engage with the material in the lesson. Fisher, Brozo, Frey, and Ivey (2007), discuss the phrase, "all teachers are teachers of reading" (p. 1). They go on to challenge this by arguing that reading, writing, speaking, and listening are ways that humans learn, therefore teachers need to bring in these strategies to allow students to engage and learn the material. Ogle, Klemp, and McBride (2007) cite Doty, Cameron, and Barton in their book to make a similar point, "teaching reading in social studies is not so much about teaching students basic reading skills as it is about teaching students how to use reading as a tool of thinking and learning" (p. 12). This provides the shift from the teacher feeling like they have to put on another identity as a reading teacher, but rather embrace



the idea that by bringing in these strategies they are helping their students to engage fully in the content.

Teaching reading strategies in a social studies classroom does not always model the conventional ideas of what teaching reading looks like, instead it can be centered around having students think about the material from various angles and answering open-ended questions like historians. Not all professions approach text in the same manner. Historians read primary and secondary sources with certain goals in mind. The social studies classroom is where students should develop the skills to be able to do this as well, as Afflerbach and VanSledright (2001) indicate when they say, “This type of reading needs to be taught specifically in the context of learning history” (p. 705). The social studies teacher is in the unique position to help the students develop these skills. Afflerbach and VanSledright (2001) go on to say that if a social studies teacher takes the time to teach students to think as a historian, then the “content of history would be learned by critical reading, analysis, and evaluation of a variety of texts and sources” (p.706) a worthy goal for any social studies classroom.

Thinking as a historian has changed over the years, argues Wineburg (2016), in our advancing technological landscape being able to question where information comes from and critique its bias is now just as important to historians as understanding the language it is written. Wineburg (2016) asserts that it is in the social studies classroom where students need to do the hard work on developing the ability to ask and answer these questions. The ability to wrestle with a text as a historian is one benefit of bringing reading strategies into the social studies classroom. Additional benefits of integrating reading strategies in the social studies classroom will be shared next.

### **Benefits of Reading Strategies in a Social Studies Classroom**

This section has described how the CCSS dictates that literacy be brought into the content area classrooms and why social studies teachers are reluctant to implement the changes needed to achieve this goal. Next a description of two positive outcomes from incorporating reading strategies will be discussed.

**Reading strategies that make content acquisition easier.** Time is a constraint that teachers dread on many levels. There is never enough time for all that needs to get done in a classroom. One of the major fears for social studies teachers is that teaching reading strategies will take away time focused on content (Evans & Clark, 2015). How can teachers set students up for mastery of the social studies content standards if they are focused on the literacy standards? In the United States today, teachers are asked to cover a number of topics in their classroom throughout the year, and therefore, feel the pressure to continually move forward; they do not feel like they have the time to slow down to teach reading strategies or dig deep into topics (Lent, 2012). The concern is that focusing on literacy will take away from the content. Many teachers see these ideas pitted against each other and do not see how they can work in conjunction with one another. This will be one of the aims of Chapter Three.

Teachers need to be taught why teaching reading strategies within a social studies classroom can help their students understand the content. Students are set up to grasp the content they are asked to master by teaching the right strategies (Gunning, 2003). The strategies and approaches that teachers choose to teach should be able to be embedded easily within current curriculum, which means the curriculum is not being taken away from, but enhanced (Swanson et al., 2016). For example, teaching students how to create

questions while previewing the text does not distract from their learning about the Civil War; instead, it will help them understand the complexity of the event and ability to dig deeper while reading their textbook and investigating primary sources. It is not about taking away from one subject area to spend time on another; rather, it is about building in reading strategies to help understand the content.

**Reading strategies need to be applicable to different types of texts.** The reading strategies taught and applied to learning in a social studies classroom should be transferable from one type of text to another. Not only will this help students build confidence in the strategy, it will also help alleviate some of the pressure for the social studies teacher. As Massey and Heafner (2004) explain, “The teaching techniques and reader strategies selected may be used across the social studies genres . . . This allows the teacher and students to establish routines for reading, regardless of the type of text used” (p. 27). The teacher should be intentional in the strategies chosen to teach students and should address the main areas of need and create a unified approach. Swanson et al. (2011) suggest, “teachers may want to select a set of strategies that complement and build on one another” (p. 266). Teachers should have an intentional plan of what strategies will work the best for their material and be transferable to multiple types of text in their curriculum.

Even though reading is the foundation of a social studies classroom, teaching reading strategies is not the foundation of social studies lessons. As this section discussed, with the adoption of the CCSS social studies teachers are no longer contemplating the question of whether they have time to address literacy strategies in their classrooms, but are now tasked with figuring out how they will implement these

strategies. Text sets have been shown to deepen students thinking on a certain topic or theme and help engage them in learning activities to master both content and literacy standards. Their benefits and the research behind how they can bridge literacy and social studies will be discussed next.

### **Introduction to Text Sets**

In my experience, teachers often teach beyond the text or curriculum that is given to them by the school or district. Texts used outside of the school appointed curriculum will be referred to as outside texts going forward, and are a way to enhance, balance, and enrich the material that is provided. Within a unit a teacher might use a collection of outside texts focused around one idea. Giorgis and Johnson (2002) define a text set as consisting “of five to ten books on a particular topic or theme. The books are of varied genre, readability, and content. They also present a range of perspectives for readers to consider” (p. 200). A text set is created by pulling together outside resources of all kinds that are centered around a central idea. This section aims to show that text sets are a tool that aid students in moving beyond a surface level understanding of content by becoming text critics. It will delve into what a text set can look like and the type of texts to include in a text set. In addition, it will look at how text sets can be used in a classroom.

### **Definition of a Text Set**

When adults look for information on a topic or issue, people research multiple resources, comparing what facts are similar, what is different, and try to piece together a comprehensive summary of information from all of their sources (University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, 2019). For adults, it has become second nature to cross reference a mix of resources for information before making an informed decision. If

adults look to multiple sources to cross reference, verify information, and come to their own conclusions, then students should be given the chance to do similar work in the classroom. Providing text sets, a preselected set of resources for students to use, allows them the chance to practice these cross referencing skills they will use as adults.

The basic definition of a text set seems simple when defined by Nichols (2009) as “a collection of sources of information that have a commonality; that is, they explore a shared topic, issue or big idea” (p. 34). However, within that general definition there are variations of what a text set might include and the intended purpose. The definition from Giorgis and Johnson (2002) provides concrete examples of types of texts that are included in the text set are “of varied genre, readability, and content” and begins to touch on the end goal of using a text set to “present a range of perspectives for readers to consider” (p. 200). It is more than just having a common theme, the texts present a variety of viewpoints and provide an array of reading levels and genres available (Giorgis & Johnson, 2002). In their article, Tracy, Menickelli, and Scales (2016) add the element that a text set should appeal to a diverse set of interests to help build engagement. Even though the semantics and specifics of what a text set consists of might be different, researchers agree that a text set is a collection of texts with the intention of building understanding around a common theme.

### **Types of Texts in a Text Set**

An early definition of a text set from Giorgis and Johnson (2002) only included books, as it is situated around the more traditional way of viewing text as just the written word. Lenters (2018) takes a more modern look at what text includes, and from that definition argues that text sets should be multimodal, or including many different types of

text, in order to engage students. She argues that current students are surrounded by a variety of texts such as visual, written, and audiovisual. Students in today's classrooms have new types of audio texts, like podcasts, and visual texts, like video blogging, that were not commonplace when Giorgis and Johnson (2002) wrote their article on text sets. Given the availability of multimodal materials, Lenters (2018) argues that teachers need to bring opportunities into their classrooms for students to practice making meaning from all of those text types, so they can do it successful independently in society.

Schools are not immune from the technology the students are exposed to outside of school hours. Students are bombarded with text to interpret at all times in many forms (Fisher, Frey & Lapp, 2011). Many of the researchers who study text sets and how they impact students' learning agree, that a variety of text types are necessary. Students encounter many types of texts, so text sets should mimic that in their creation. Nichols (2009) explains this by saying, "Today's expanding media landscape demands that we expand our instructional definition of text to include video and other visual images, online text, and text in a multitude of other media forms not traditionally used in classrooms" (p. 43). She goes on to add, "Differing formats also add richness to a text set" (p. 36). The richness Nichols refers to is having a variety of text types in a text set. Students do not interact with only fiction stories when they leave the classroom, or informational articles, so the text they use in the classroom should mirror the real world. A social studies classroom is the perfect place for students to learn to interact with a variety of text types since historians regularly use many types of text in their work. Newspaper articles, diaries, maps, interviews, pictures, data, documentaries, propaganda are some examples used in the social studies that would be good additions to any text set.

Not only does expanding the definition of text beyond books meet the literacy demands society is placing on students outside of classrooms, it opens the door for other rich resources to be used in the classroom.

The CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2018) ask students to interact with different types of texts and make meaning from using them in conjunction with one another. For example, in the Literacy Standards for History/Social Studies one of the standards is, “Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts” and another is, “Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic” (National Governors Association & Council of Chief School Officers, 2018, English Language Arts Standards>>History/Social Studies>>Grade 6-8, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, ¶

1). Both of these standards ask students to use multiple types of text together to make meaning. Lenters (2018) says, “Bringing into the classroom multimodal texts that students enjoy out of school also provides an important space for educators to help students critically evaluate the texts they encounter both in and out of school” (p. 645). She addresses the need to incorporate multimodal texts, a necessity because of the standard to integrate visual information, into the classroom to help make sure that students know how to critically evaluate the texts they interact with once they leave school, which opens for the door for critical literacy to frame those discussions. A text set is an opportunity to address these standards in a classroom using multimodal texts centered around a single theme or topic.

## Benefits of Text Sets

The review of the research literature for this project identified six benefits of integrating text sets into classroom instruction. The six benefits are:

- Increases student engagement
- Integrates different perspectives
- Creates access for all readers
- Builds prior knowledge
- Builds vocabulary in context
- Scaffolds for more difficult text

A summary of each of the six benefits is included in the following section.

**Increases student engagement.** In 2017, Willison wrote an article for the *Boston Globe Newspaper*, “15 ways Harry Potter has changed culture since the first book was published 20 years ago.” The article is a testament to society’s fascination with J. K. Rowling’s creations in her series that has continued to engage readers, even twenty years later. The level of engagement for many is very different reading a Harry Potter book then when trying to read a textbook or other educational text. When reading Harry Potter, the reader can be swept up in the magic, unconcerned if a certain scene does not quite make sense. However, when slogging through a textbook, students are trying to hunt down the most basic information, forgoing the big picture for specific details. When students are engaged in reading, their level of comprehension is increased and they are motivated to read more (Lupo, Strong, Lewis, Walpole, & McKenna, 2017; Bersh, 2013). Finding a buy-in to get students more engaged in reading, in turn will build their



comprehension of the material. Text sets allow room for student choice, which naturally builds in a higher level of engagement for students.

There are many ideas about how text sets work to develop engagement for students. Some researchers suggest it is because while reading from a wide variety of sources, students begin to naturally develop questions about the topic that they then want to answer (Giorgis & Johnson, 2002). Others, like Bersh (2013) attribute higher levels of engagement when students use text sets to the increase in student choice, and the importance of students taking ownership of their own learning. Lupo et al. (2017) also argue that text sets allow for students to have authentic, successful encounters with text at their own reading levels, which builds their natural engagement. The combination of all of these factors raise a student's curiosity to investigate more. In conclusion, text sets draw readers in and keep them interested while exploring many types of texts, which leads to higher comprehension of the material.

**Integrates different perspectives.** Even though a textbook may include multiple viewpoints of a situation or event, it is still only providing the students with one perspective. The authors and publishers decide what to include and what to leave out of the publication. In her book on textbook fatigue, *Overcoming Textbook Fatigue: 21st Century Tools to Revitalize Teaching and Learning*, Lent (2012) writes about students needing more than one source to understand different perspectives of a theme, stating that “These various points of view can’t be shown in a single text, and students need the experience of various accounts to understand how they differ” (p. 150). Each text has made its own decisions about what should be included and what should be left out, creating its own interpretation.

Having different sources of information for students to explore gives them a collection of viewpoints to investigate on a subject and to understand that there is not just one way of interpreting the facts. Using multiple texts provides an opportunity for the reader to learn there is not just one perspective of the event, as Tschida and Buchanan (2015) explain; and Dodge and Crutcher (2015) add that those multiple perspectives provide an opportunity for marginalized groups to find a voice. Clarke and Whitney (2009) bring this back to the classroom by saying when students are looking at more than one text in conjunction with each other, they start to see the ways the power structure in a society silences certain voices and how that impacts the stories that are told.

In her TED Talk, *The danger of a single story*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009), discusses this idea in depth when speaking about the books she read growing up in Nigeria. She describes the problem with only being exposed to one perspective as, “the single story creates stereotypes and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.” When using text sets to bring multiple perspectives into student discussions, the layer of critical literacy is then added into the classroom. It can protect against providing only a single story. Critical literacy will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

Students can use multiple texts together, like a text set, to start to question the story that is being told and the perspectives that are present or missing. “Text sets provide multiple perspectives on complex issues,” Crawford and Zygouris-Coe (2008) write, “They show students different ‘truths’ and encourage the importance of questioning and investigating ‘standard truths’ and issues of debate” (p. 199). Given the opportunity to grapple with many different sides to an issue, students start to develop their own ideas on

complex conversations happening in society. They begin to understand the world in a new way, and from that, see it in a new light as well (Bersh, 2013). Once they have started this, they can become participants in the conversation.

Part of students becoming contributors in complex conversations happening in society is realizing those conversations do not have easy answers. Students often focus on whether their answer was right or wrong, and can have trouble when the answer lands in a grey area where there is not one correct response. Text sets provide an opportunity for students to “stretch their thinking beyond the fallacy that there is always a right or wrong answer, a black or white solution, or a good or bad decision” (Ciecierski & Bintz, 2017). Students need time to wrestle with these ideas and confront the fact that not every question in the world is easily answerable.

Text sets provide one way to allow students time to do this and become more comfortable with the idea that not every question has an immediate answer. As Nichols (2009) writes:

Immersion in a wide range of text types not only supports children’s efforts to expand comprehension and topics and issues by offering varied formats, but also develops awareness of the varied ways they might send their thoughts on issues or topics out into the world. (p. 41)

Text sets also allow students to become more comfortable with the complexity of a world filled with viewpoints other than their own. While figuring out there are not easy answers to questions, students are learning just how many answers there can be to a question.

Middle school is an appropriate time to allow students time to struggle with complicated questions that do not have an easy answer. In their article on early

adolescents' development, Wigfield, Lutz, and Wagner (2005) discuss how adolescents are able to think more abstractly as well as consider the hypothetical when looking at complicated situations that are presented to them. They suggest that adolescents are better able to reflect and organize information, meaning middle school is the time when students are better prepared to wrestle with these complex questions and multiple viewpoints, compared to younger students.

It is essential for students to be exposed to perspectives that differ from their own, but just as important, is students seeing themselves in the texts chosen for a text set. Ogle, Klemp, and McBride (2007) discuss the need for multiple sources in a social studies classroom and add the importance of students seeing themselves reflected in the material by saying, "be sure that they can find themselves in some of the texts they read" (p. 26). They discuss that it builds student engagement for students to see themselves in the texts they are reading. All students have many identities they bring into the classroom, including socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, among others not listed. By providing a diverse group of texts, hopefully all students are able to see themselves reflected in some way in the texts, while simultaneously learning about others (McNair, 2016). Other researchers, like Bersh (2013), contend it is less about student engagement and more about our changing society and the need for children outside of the mainstream to have moments of affirmation by seeing reflections of themselves in the content in their classrooms. Both assessments are valid and provide a compelling argument to support text sets with a variety of texts to be given a place in classrooms.

**Creates access for all readers.** Students progress through the stages of reading at various speeds, which means at any one time there might be readers at many different reading levels in one classroom. It can be difficult for a teacher to provide quality resources for all students when trying to meet a variety of reading levels. Text sets are a way to meet the needs of all students. First, it is important that teachers are aware of their individual students' reading levels, so they know what materials need to be provided (Ogle et al., 2007). Within a classroom there may be accelerated readers, struggling readers, English language learners, special education students, and a mix of readers at other levels. It is important that all students find texts accessible and approachable.

A text set can make the chosen topic accessible to them all if the correct texts are chosen. Lupo et al. (2017) assert that students should have a mix of easy and difficult texts across the year, so when designing text sets the teacher should include a variety of reading levels to make sure there are a wide range of levels included. Students should be able to find some easy and difficult texts within the text set. The selections that are at a lower reading level, or texts that are mostly visual, allow for struggling readers and English language learners to be a part of the conversation (Nichols, 2009). Having texts that are at a lower reading level or depend on visuals to convey meaning, allow struggling readers or English language learners to understand the subject and interact in discussions or classroom activities without having to understand more complex text. Also, Bersch (2013) points out that many texts, particularly picture books, are now being printed in other languages, or with both languages in the publication. Including these publications in text sets provides another way for English language learners to engage in the deep thinking a text set grants students. By providing texts that are accessible for struggling

readers or English language learners, they are given the opportunity to participate in discussions at the same level as their peers.

**Builds prior knowledge.** Every student that walks through the classroom door brings with them a different set of life experiences, which make up their prior knowledge. Schema theory states that what a student comes to the lesson already knowing influences what they will learn (Lupo et al., 2018). The authors continue by adding, if the student does not already have previous knowledge of the topic for new information to connect to, then the teacher needs to provide it.

Similar to students and their reading levels, students do not all have the same prior knowledge. Ciecierski and Bintz (2017) write, “Because students come to the classroom with varying levels of background knowledge, having an instructional tool to help them acquire background knowledge for new concepts is important” (p. 479). There are many reasons why students have different levels of background knowledge on a subject. Neuman and Kaefer (2014) focus on socioeconomic factors in their study, but also mention English language learners, foster children, and other life experiences as factors for various levels of prior knowledge. Text sets are one way that teachers can provide missing prior knowledge. Exploring multiple texts about a single theme can activate the prior knowledge for students who are familiar with the topic, but help build it for students who are completely unfamiliar (Soalt, 2005).

Prior knowledge is an important part of the learning process and comprehension. Daniels and Zelman (2014) discuss the importance of prior knowledge and activating it because it gives the brain the opportunity to categorize the new information with information it already has stored. They continue by saying, for students who already have

some working prior knowledge on the topic being studied, a short activity to help bring it forward is enough, but students who are starting with none will require activities to help build their knowledge on a topic. A text set is an opportunity for students to gather a lot of information from multiple sources and then create a backdrop of understanding for the topic. This information can then be used on other classroom activities and provide a place for the brain to categorize the new information. In this way, a text set works to activate, as well as create prior knowledge for all students in the classroom.

**Builds vocabulary in context.** When students are reading multiple texts on a single subject, certain vocabulary is repeated across texts. Ogle et al. (2007) say, “students need many opportunities to see, hear, and use new terms to make them their own” (p. 27). It is not enough for students to be told the word once at the beginning of class, or read it one time in a textbook to understand key words; they need the opportunity to see the words in context and experience it many times. A text set can provide this opportunity in a natural way. A group of texts can expose students to vocabulary in an authentic way, as reiterated by Ogle et al. (2007), “When a teacher gives students several texts on the same topic, students encounter the same content-specific terms frequently and thus build their familiarity with the key vocabulary” ( p. 27). It is the repeated readings in the different texts that help students build a true understanding of new vocabulary.

Another benefit of building vocabulary using text sets is students can develop a deeper and fuller understanding of the word through repeated readings in multiple texts than a singular definition from a textbook. Most text sets include a variety of text types, including fiction and informational text, which may use different synonyms to help

students build, as Soalt (2005) describes it, “shades of meaning” (p. 681). Thus, providing students a more well-rounded definition of the word than what they would be presented in a single text, like a textbook.

A final benefit of building vocabulary through multiple readings in context, is it builds on the deeper understanding of the vocabulary and how that impacts classroom activities. If students understand the vocabulary well enough to use it in classroom discussions, then those discussions can become more meaningful. When explaining how picture books helped her adolescent students develop empathy and cultural knowledge, Taliaferro (2009) describes how a text set helped her students build the vocabulary to comprehend a more complicated text, and because of that they were able to have deeper discussions than if she had dived right into the complex text without the text set. The text set allowed the students to acquire new vocabulary in context, while also scaffolding more difficult material the teacher wanted to use with the class.

**Scaffolds for more difficult text.** The CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2018) have set the standard that “By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently” (English Language Arts Standards>>History/Social Studies>>Grade 6-8, Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity, ¶ 1). For students to reach mastery of this standard by the end of 8th grade, teachers need to provide opportunities for students to engage in the skills needed to reach mastery at this level. Lent (2012) argues that only giving students a textbook is not enough; teachers need to offer a variety of texts to students for this to happen. Text sets can teach students how to access more difficult material. Bersh (2013) says that text sets “facilitate students’ development of learning



strategies such as brainstorming, making charts, webs and making connections” (p. 49). Students need time to practice skills that they can apply to more complex material, and a text set provides them the chance to do this work.

Not only can text sets help students practice skills to master more complex text, but they can also help struggling readers access difficult material. One strategy for this is to include visuals and texts at lower reading levels, as was discussed earlier (Ogle et al., 2007). This gives struggling readers a way to understand the text, make connections, and begin to ask questions. From there, the text set can include other more complex texts the student can explore once they are interested and their prior knowledge has been activated. When discussing how they built their text sets, Lupo et al. (2017) write, “We used a combination of both easier and more difficult texts to ensure that students have successful encounters with reading throughout the text set” (p. 436). It is important to have a mix of reading levels and types of text in the text set, so students can start with the easier texts, find success, get engaged, practice their skills, and move up to more complicated text so they can participate in rich conversations about the topic with their peers.

There are many benefits of using text sets in a classroom and they have been reviewed in detail in this section. One of the main goals of a text set is to help students build a better understanding of the subject being studied in order to have more in depth class discussions. Text sets can set the stage for these conversations by providing the vocabulary and building the comprehension of ideas surrounding the topic, but critical literacy can provide the framework used for the discussions and lesson activities. Critical literacy and the research on how it fits into the classroom will be discussed next.

## **Critical Literacy**

One of the ultimate goals teachers ask of their students is to think beyond the text on the page. This starts with critical reading, or close reading, which at this point will be defined as making meaning directly from the text; but critical literacy takes that thinking even deeper. Critical literacy is defined by Stevens and Bean (2007) as taking the elements of critical reading and applying the outside factors, like historical, social, and political contexts to the text to make meaning. In critical reading, the reader looks at the text for meaning; whereas in critical literacy, the reader looks beneath or behind the text for meaning. Stevens and Bean (2007) describe looking beneath and behind the text as “in essence, engaging in critical reading is a search for verifiable reading, whereas critical literacy is the endeavor to work within multiple plausible interpretations of the text” (p.

6). The first section in the next portion of the literature review will continue to define critical literacy and how it is different than critical thinking, or close reading. The second section will look at why teachers should include it in their teaching and why it fits in a social studies classroom. The aim is to continue to show how critical literacy can work with text sets to bring literacy instruction into the social studies classroom and answer the research question: *How can text sets be used in a middle school social studies classroom to teach critical literacy?*

## **Defining Critical Literacy**

Reading is more than decoding words on a page, rather Stevens and Bean (2007) describe it as making meaning from a variety of texts and that is “the essence of any definition of literacy is meaning” (p. 4). It is a meaning-making process; the reader decodes the words on the page and makes meaning from them. Sometimes the meaning is

very superficial and other times the reader digs deeper into the text to make profound connections. Critical literacy takes reading and thinking about the text even one step further, using specific directions or lenses to analyze the text. As Soares and Wood (2010) describe critical literacy, it is an approach to reading that asks the reader to bring a political, sociocultural, historical, and economic perspective to their analysis of the text, to become more critically aware of their own values and responsibilities to society. The authors also note that when taking on a critical literacy perspective, it is not enough to simply analyze the text for the inequalities and perspectives, but there is the element of seeing how that is at play in the reader's own life.

Examples of the ways in which the reader can step back and think about how a text is playing out in their own lives is by asking questions of bias, what perspectives are being represented, what power structures in society are in the text. Based then on these observations and interpretations, the reader feels a need to react in some way. In Winograd's (2015) definition of critical literacy he focuses on the relationship between the author's bias and language. He states it as "the practice of analysis and questioning texts for their (authors') biases, and the practice of using language to engage in civic life that has as its goal, equity and democracy" (p. 5). In his definition, he makes the connection between the reader's interpretation of the author's bias through their word choice, and how that motivates the reader to respond in their own civic life. There is an element of seeking social justice, or being called to action, based on the reader's interpretation of the texts.

### **Different than Critical Reading**

At the surface, critical literacy and critical reading, or close reading as many educators call it, look very similar; since both dive into the text and search to find meaning based on the words the author chooses to write. At its heart, critical reading looks at what is on the page, trying to pull meaning from the text, but does not bring outside factors in understanding the text (Stevens & Bean, 2007). The reader looks at everything within that text, for example with a fictional passage the reader looks at characterization, actions of the characters, setting, and plot structure, to gain understanding and interpret the author's intended message. They are not bringing in outside information to make deductions or interpretations of the text, they rely solely on what is on the page.

On the other hand, as noted by Ciardiello (2004), critical literacy is based on analyzing a text by bringing in outside contexts that the reader then lays onto the text to create meaning. As explored in the section above, critical literacy asks the reader to look at a text and make meaning by applying outside factors, some of those outside factors might be: societal power structures, historical forces, and economic classes. Then the reader holds up a mirror to reflect on their own values and voice in society (Ciardiello, 2004). For example within a fictional passage, the reader looks at what voices are and are not represented in the text, how the power structures in the text resemble the power structures in society at the time the piece was written, examine word choice of the author, and explore how the story might be different if the socioeconomic classes of the characters were changed. The reader brings in outside contextual information to make meaning from the passage.

Whereas critical reading looks to the words written on the page to make meaning, critical literacy looks at why the words were chosen and what is behind the words to make meaning. When engaging in close reading the reader has something to go back and verify their interpretations against; they can point to a specific place in the text as evidence. That is not the case in critical literacy, because it brings in outside information; information beyond just what the text presents. In other words, Stevens and Bean (2007) explain the difference as “. . . engaging in critical reading is a search for a verifiable reading, whereas critical literacy is the endeavor to work within multiple plausible interpretations of a text” (p. 6). It can be more comfortable for the reader to stay with interpretations that can be more black and white in nature, like critical reading. The idea of critical literacy and its meaning making can be a grey area, there are no right or wrong answers to the questions being asked.

When using critical literacy approach, the questions often have no right or wrong answers, so it can be difficult to assess whether a student has achieved mastery of the concepts. In the CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2018) many of the literacy standards, for social studies in particular, focus on meaning making in text. In his book on critical literacy, Winograd (2015) grapples with the focus on text dependent analysis and critical reading in the Common Core Standards, but the lack of critical literacy. He claims critical literacy needs to be taught even though it is not explicitly in the standards because it is “the opportunity for students to relate the text to the personal, political, and moral dimensions” (p. 207). So critical reading is meaning within the text itself and critical literacy is asking the reader to take the text and connect the meaning to the world beyond

the text. Even though the CCSS focus on in text meaning making in the literacy standards for the social studies classroom, there is room for critical literacy.

### **Importance of Integrating Critical Literacy in Social Studies**

If critical literacy is not embedded in the Common Core State Standards, as Winograd (2015) said, and it is not systematically included in reading curricula, then the question is often asked about why teachers should work to include it in their lessons. Many social studies curricula in the United States are written at a readability level that is too high, lack clear introductions and summaries, have high levels of vocabulary, and most questions are detail oriented (Berkeley et al., 2016; Stevens & Bean, 2007). Ogle et al. (2007) lay out the reasons students find reading in social studies to be so difficult as students do not have enough prior knowledge, students are expected to read texts that cover a large amount of information, students from minority populations do not feel represented, and students cannot relate to the information the way it is presented.

Stevens and Bean (2007) continue beyond that statement to make the argument that it is necessary to bring critical literacy into the classroom to meet the growing demands of changing literacies placed on students. One of the changing literacies for students is global literacy, which is defined as being critically reflective as a person engages with written text, images, audio, video, and interactive technologies (Callow, 2017). Stevens and Bean (2007) state, “Currently, most of our classrooms more strongly reflect the technology and texts of the 1950’s rather than contemporary texts that are hybridized across format and purpose” (p. 18). As our world changes and becomes more digital, so does our idea of what being a literate person looks like. Students need to be globally literate, understanding texts and being critically reflective of those texts that are

coming at them throughout the day, argues Callow (2017). In an age where people can consume media and information from multiple sources at any given moment, they need to be able to make judgements about that text and its message, which ultimately is what critical literacy asks its readers to do.

As the world becomes more connected, students become more exposed to different ways of life from their own, while still trying to answer the question of who they are as a person. In the beginning of her article on windows and mirrors for classroom libraries, McNair (2016) writes, “Books have the potential to... inform while also affirming the multiple aspects of students’ identities and exposing them to the values, viewpoints, and historical legacies of others” (p. 375). Some texts in a classroom operate as windows, showing students a way of life different from their own; and some texts operate as mirrors, allowing them to see aspects of their life reflected back at them (Style, 1988). It is important for students to have both represented in the curricula taught in their classrooms.

As stated earlier, students come into the classroom with many identities, and different texts may reflect different parts of that identity for them (McNair, 2016). In her paper, Style (1988) explains that it may seem unnecessary to discuss needing both windows and mirrors in the classroom because it would be common sense, but that is not the case for many commonly used curricula. Style (1988) describes the American education system being comfortable with similarities, and many teachers thinking they are providing the best environment for their students if they maintain a “color-blind” approach. As she says, “Promoting such partial seeing is highly problematic for the creation of curriculum which will serve all students adequately” (p. 3), because without

acknowledging that students are different from one another a curriculum that allows students to see themselves in it cannot be created. For example, at the beginning of their article, Soares and Wood (2010) explain a student's connection with the main character of the poem the class was reading because of a shared ethnicity, and how the student felt empowered to discuss it in a small discussion group. Students need the opportunity to see themselves reflected in the text, as well as their differences acknowledged and celebrated.

### **How Critical Literacy Fits into the Social Studies Classroom**

Soares and Wood (2010) declare, "it is through the content of social studies that students learn to make sense of their lives" (p. 487). The social studies classroom is where students are asked to investigate society from many perspectives. Each of the social studies classes takes on a different angle of community, how it is shaped, and its impact on people. It is in the history, civics, geography, and other social studies classrooms where students learn about the world and in doing so learn about themselves as Soares and Wood (2010) suggest. Part of how students do this is by exploring different perspectives and taking on various voices within a society. The investigation of other voices gives them a chance to reflect on themselves. As Soares and Wood (2010) say, "teachers of critical literacy stress that texts have more than one interpretation and that varied perspectives should be considered" (p.487) and using the critical literacy framework in the social studies classroom allows the students' perspectives to be part of the conversation.

Critical literacy, at its heart, asks the reader to do this from the start by always asking what perspectives are represented and which ones are not. In their article, Soares and Wood (2010) continue to argue for bringing critical literacy into the social studies



classroom because social studies teachers ask their students to find the missing voice. They challenge their students to view events from diverse vantages and look for connections.

This sets the stage for other questions that critical literacy asks of its reader, like questioning the author's bias and intentions. Ciardello (2004) asserts that one of the hallmarks of critical literacy is looking at different viewpoints and creating meaning from how they interact with one another. Having the different perspectives allows readers to accept the idea that all texts have a bias and work to silence certain voices (Clarke & Whitney, 2009). Many situations, events, and ideas discussed in social studies allows for students to see this in action when looking at a situation from different peoples' perspectives, which is what Clarke and Whitney (2009) suggest. Asking students to look at multiple perspectives found in a variety of sources, through a framework of critical literacy, engages students in deeper thinking than the fact finding that is often thought of when thinking about reading in a social studies classroom.

### **Summary**

This chapter reviewed the literature for the three main themes that drive the research question of this capstone project: *How can text sets be used in a middle school social studies classroom to teach critical literacy?* The chapter explored how and why literacy strategies should be taught in a social studies classroom, as well as the benefits they provide. It also discussed text sets, the research behind why they should be used and how they can be used in a social studies classroom. The final theme explored defining critical literacy in detail, how it is different than critical thinking, and how it fits into the social studies classroom. In Chapter Three the capstone project will be explained in more

detail, including a summary of the project, the setting for the project, the timeline for completion, a possible budget, and who the stakeholders would be for the project.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Road to the Project

#### Introduction

Chapter Three explains this capstone project specifically and how it answered the question, “*How can text sets be used in a middle school social studies classroom to teach critical literacy?*” The purpose of this project was to create a text set for one main unit that align with the state social studies standards to assist in bringing critical literacy into the social studies classroom. The need for this project became clear to me while working on my Masters coursework and seeing the need for more literacy instruction to be built into the social studies curriculum, while also seeing a necessity for all of my students to have a voice in the material. The project was intended for sixth grade teachers, who teach social studies in Minnesota.

In the first section, the chapter describes the overview of the project, and the major research it was based around. From there, it details the setting and intended audience of the project, explains the final product, and goes over the timeline when creating the project. The goal of this chapter is to describe how the project was put together and how all the pieces came together to answer the question, *How can text sets be used in a middle school social studies classroom to teach critical literacy?*

#### Overview of Project

To answer the research question, *How can text sets be used in a middle school social studies classroom to teach critical literacy*, my project created a text set for one unit of the curriculum created by the Minnesota Historical Society. It aligned with the 6th grade Minnesota State Social Studies Standards. The unit of focus was comparing

modern immigration (since 1945) to the United States with past immigration waves. This unit was chosen based on state standards, as well as several discussions with other middle school social studies colleagues of which topics were most difficult to find outside resources to supplement. The text set included varying types of text. The document has a description of each text, similar to an annotated bibliography. The text set is accompanied by an explanation of five critical literacy strategies, and suggestions of how the texts can be used in accompaniment with a sixth grade social studies curriculum.

As noted earlier in Chapter two, one of the benefits of using text sets is that they include many types of texts, a range of reading levels, and include multiple perspectives on the same topic, (Lent, 2012). To make sure a text set does this, a set of criteria guiding the choice of texts needed to be added. As part of the final project, a list of criteria has been included to help determine quality texts for the text sets that are a part of the project, as well as future text sets,. The final document included the checklist, an explanation of how to use the checklist, and an example of how the criteria checklist was used for the immigration text set.

## **Research**

A review of the research literature that supports the two main areas to answer the research question of using text sets in a middle school social studies classroom follows.

The two areas of research presented are:

- Text set research
- Critical literacy

A summary of each research area is included in this section.

**Text sets.** Multiple researchers (Nichols, 2009; Giorgis & Johnson, 2002; Soalt, 2005) assert the benefits of using text sets in classrooms to deepen students thinking on specific themes. Others have delved even deeper into text sets and shown how using text sets in content area classrooms, like social studies, not only bring reading strategies into a classroom beyond English, but also give students a way to dive into the material deeper and make complex connections (Bersh, 2013; Tracy, Menickelli, & Scales, 2016). It is this research that this capstone project and the use of text sets is based on. The use of text sets has been shown to raise readers' engagement and allow the students the opportunity to practice multiple reading strategies to build connections between multiple texts. The second line of research supporting this project is the related to critical literacy.

**Critical literacy.** According to Morrell (2008) critical literacy and its roots go back to Paulo Freire and his work in Brazil in the 1970's. Morrell (2008) describes how the work of Freire examined the disadvantaged in Brazil, how they would interpret and interact with a text and its structure based on what they bring to the text, and how the idea of social justice plays into the reading of a text. Other researches, like McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004), explain that Freire believed the reader should not have a superficial interaction with the text and passively accept it or be manipulated by it, but that the reader should read to understand its purpose and what they put into understanding the text. Reading a text from this vantage point, as they point out, is a power shift. The author has the power to create and present a message, say McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004), but the readers have the power to be text critics who question and analyze that message based on their life experiences.

Bringing critical literacy into the social studies classroom is a natural crossover with its focus on social justice and action, especially with the advent of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) & the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), 2018). As Gilles, Wang, Smith, and Johnson (2013) assert, the social studies classroom is changing due to the CCSS and social studies teachers need to be willing to change too. The CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2018) bring literacy demands into the social studies classroom and Soares and Woods (2010) make a strong case for how critical literacy can seamlessly fit into a social studies classroom. They argue that even though the demands on social studies teachers are mounting, students deserve to be given the tools, like critical literacy, to help them learn and explore their world. This teaches them about themselves, because that is the point of social studies classes. Adding in critical literacy might ask that the teacher be willing to change approaches or their mindset, but it is worth it because it is what the students deserve and need to achieve success.

### **Setting**

The setting for this project is a Kindergarten-12th grade online school in a Midwestern state. The school has an enrollment of about 2,500 students K-12. The middle school has an enrollment of around 650 students for sixth through eighth grade. In an online setting, the school services students from across the entire state, meaning there are students from all settings and circumstances. The basic demographics of the school mirror the states demographics in terms of race, socioeconomic status, and other factors tracked by the state's Department of Education. According to the Department of

Education website, as of 2018, 75% of the families attending the school stated they were white.

The students who attend this online school come from a variety of households. Some students live in the major cities in the state and are accustomed to a very urban way of life surrounded by people from diverse backgrounds and lifestyles. Other students live on rural farms or in parts of the state which is less populated, so they are not exposed to as many different lifestyles on a day to day basis. The text set created for this capstone project was created with the idea that the students using the materials come from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Standardized state testing starts in third grade and continues at various points through high school in the state the project is created in. The students are labeled proficient if they reach a certain score, which is the marker that the Department of Education wants all students to reach. At the time the capstone project was created the school has seen a continued rise in reading scores. The school has also consistently outscored the state in proficiency each of the last three years. In reading the specific school has outperformed the state in proficiency. In 2016 the school had 61.4% of student proficient and the state was at 60.2%. In 2017, the school had 62.6% of students performing at a proficient level and the state had 60.6%. The most current year, in 2018, the school had 63.4% as proficient or above on the reading test and the state had 60.4%.

The project was designed for the use in a face-to-face classroom. This was done intentionally, based on the lack of research available for K-12 online education. Because the project will include criteria for how to choose texts for a text set and suggested activities for the text set, other middle school teachers can use the capstone project as a

model for how to build similar text sets for their classroom settings and curriculum. This capstone project can be used by other educators, like literacy teachers or literacy coaches, to help show how literacy, or specifically text sets or critically literacy, can be more seamlessly brought into a social studies classroom. There is also room for other teachers, like special education teachers, science teachers, or sixth grade teachers in an inclusion model, to use the resources created in the capstone project as models for their own classrooms or similar projects.

### **Budget**

To have a complete version of the text set created for this project, a teacher or school would need to spend approximately \$340 to purchase one copy of each text. Depending on resources and intentions, there might be more cost involved if the teacher or school decide to purchase a classroom set of one novel, or multiple copies of a few of the novels included in the text set. Based on the size of the text set, a teacher or school may chose to focus on a smaller number of the texts, which would reduce the price. There are a number of the texts in the text set that are available for free. In the Appendix of this project there is a list of suggested texts and their ISBN number; it is included in the project as a part of the text set summaries.

### **Timeline**

The project began in September 2018 when the research question, *How can text sets be used in a middle school social studies classroom to teach critical literacy?* was developed and written. Chapters One, Two and Three were written and revised over the next few months, October through January. During the writing process much of the focus was on researching and developing the main themes of Chapter Two. Many resources,



including the online databases at Hamline University were used to find books, articles, and other materials to find content to answer the research question. After reading and reviewing the collected data, Chapter Two was drafted and revised.

I started collecting resources for the chosen text set in December of 2019. In the search, multiple approaches were utilized to find appropriate resources. Online searches of different book awards, such as the Coretta Scott King Book Award list, were reviewed, as well as Google and Amazon searches. The Minnesota Historical Society's website provided many resources and ideas for further investigation. The multimedia texts for the text set were the most difficult to find based on the need for them to school and age appropriate as well as meeting the standards and goals of the unit. Other resources found during the research process that could be used for future text sets are included in the Appendix.

In February 2019, the state standards for sixth grade social studies and literacy addressed during the unit were identified and then the guided questions for the text set were written based around those standards. The text set criteria checklist and lesson plans were drafted during March 2019. During this month the descriptions of the five chosen critical literacy strategies were also created. Throughout February, March, and April revisions to Chapters One, Two, and Three continued to be worked on and reviewed.

During the month of April 2019, I wrote Chapter Four as a reflection of my project and process. It was also during this time that I worked with my peer editors and content advisors to make final revisions of Chapters One, Two, and Three. The actual

PDF project document was also edited and revised as needed. The final product was completed in early May 2019.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the capstone project was reviewed and explained in detail. It provided an overview of the project and what it would look like when finished. The next section talked about the research and creating the project. A budget for the creation of the text set and resources was included in Chapter Three. The actual artifact and how the information will be presented to the intended audience was covered. Demographics were provided for the school I taught at while the capstone project was written. Finally, a timeline of completion for the project was given.

Chapter Four will review the research question the project was centered around and reflect on the final product. A reflection of the process used to create the project, what the next steps would be for this project, as well as limitations for the project will be discussed in more detail. It will also look where this project can go next and look back on major takeaways from the process.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Conclusion

#### Purpose

Based on the need that became apparent to me through my own teaching and research for this project, Chapters One through Three of this capstone, along with the capstone project, worked to answer the question: *How can text sets be used in a middle school social studies classroom to teach critical literacy?* Chapter Four will include a brief summary of the literature review, a description of the finished project, limitations of the project, and a reflection on my personal growth as a researcher and developer of this project. The purpose of my project was to create text sets to teach critical literacy in a middle school social studies classroom. The final product included a text set criteria checklist to use when creating a text set, an example text set on the immigration standards for the sixth grade Minnesota State Standards, and a list of critical literacy strategies that can be used with the example text set.

#### Summary of Literature Review

Throughout my investigation to effectively bring literacy strategies into the middle school social studies classroom, it became apparent that tools needed to be created to help social studies teachers see how literacy strategies can be seamlessly built into their lessons. These strategies can help propel their students into even deeper thinking of complex topics. This led me to research how critical literacy strategies can be used with text sets in order to increase content area understanding in a meaningful way. The research showed that bringing together a group of texts around a single topic that provides many different perspectives allows students to engage in the complex analysis

that critical literacy, and ultimately, both the Common Core State Standards and the Minnesota Social Studies State Standards, expects of students.

Each area of research supported this culminating idea in a substantial way. Research on text sets reinforced the idea that multiple texts of various levels and formats gives all readers in the classroom a chance to engage in the material and build proper background knowledge to become confident participants in discussions and classroom activities (Bersh, 2013; Neuman, Kaefer & Pinkham, 2014). As Soares and Wood (2010) pointed out, the use of critical literacy strategies provides an opportunity for multiple voices to be represented, both within the material studied and in students seeing themselves represented. Finally, using these two strategies together, a social studies teacher can support the development of his/her students as readers and strengthen their understanding of class content simultaneously, while meeting the growing demands of the Common Core State Standards.

### **Project Description**

My project developed a PDF document that includes a text set criteria checklist, the example Immigration Text Set, a list of five critical literacy strategies, and additional resources for possible future text sets. The Immigration Text Set began with a unit overview. It included the guiding questions created for the unit and the content and literacy standards that can be mastered and addressed using the resources. An example of how the text set criteria was used to develop the Immigration Text Set was included. It provided a list of all the texts included, a short summary of each text, the reading level, text type, and associated ISBN number. In addition to the text set, an explanation of five critical literacy strategies that could be used with the Immigration Text Set, as well as

other text sets created in the future, was added to the project. After each critical literacy strategy was explained, a list of suggested activities to accompany the Immigration Text Set was included. The Immigration Text Set PDF can be found in a separate document on Digital Commons.

### **Limitations**

As I completed my project, I encountered several roadblocks to overcome. My original intent was to create multiple text sets and activities addressing many units in the sixth grade social studies standards. It became clear early on in the process, that due to time constraints, my project needed to be targeted to a few key units. At that point in the process, I chose three specific units: the immigration standards, land cession treaties, and the fur trade. Time, again, became a factor when researching and reading resources for the text sets. It was important to me to find and incorporate a wide variety of sources, and due to the finite amount of time I had to complete my capstone project, I needed to narrow down the number of units again to focus in on creating one quality unit.

Another limitation that narrowed my project was making sure that I stayed true to the original intent. Near the beginning of the capstone project, the intent was to include five lesson plans, one for each critical literacy strategy explained. As I began writing the lessons plans, I instantly began feeling confined and as if I was limiting the variety of activities that could be used in the classroom. To solve this and to go back to the original goal of providing social studies teachers many examples of how to bring critical literacy into the classroom, the project now includes a list of possible activities with each strategy instead of one lesson plan.

A limitation that may arise for teachers using the project in their classroom is collecting the text set as a whole. All books are readily available from multiple vendors and libraries, but to gather all of them would take funds and/or time to track them down from other resources. The approximate cost of the Immigration Text Set is \$340. Similarly, gathering multiple copies of some of the novels used can be difficult. To successfully use the text set, there would not need to be a classroom set of one specific novel purchased, but rather more than one copy of each novel would need to be available, which requires funding. When creating the text set, I intentionally included resources that were available digitally and would not need to be purchased. This allows teachers without a budget to purchase books to still be able to use parts of the project in their classrooms.

### **Author's Reflection**

Bridging the gap between content areas and literacy has grown to be a passion of mine and the research devoted to creating this project has only solidified that idea for me as an educator. Delving deeply into how to weave strong reading practices, like critical literacy, into content classrooms, such as a sixth grade social studies class, has made me confident in my skills of leading by example through my teaching practices. My research cemented how important it is for teachers of all content areas to incorporate reading strategies into their lesson plans. I have become comfortable understanding and applying critical literacy strategies within the classroom. As a result of this project, I have also become an expert in the sixth grade Minnesota State Social Studies and Literacy Standards, as well as more confident in my understanding of the Common Core State Standards.

The next step for this project is to finish creating the land cession treaties and fur trade units, expanding on the list of possible resources in the Additional Resources found in the Appendix of my capstone project PDF. With the list of possible resources to use for the text sets already started, the creation of these two text sets are the logical next step. I would also like to continue building text sets that can be used by fellow sixth grade teachers. Once the text sets have been created using the text set criteria checklist developed, a set of formal lesson plans showcasing the critical literacy strategies can be completed.

While completing my coursework for the capstone project, the importance of staying current on research for reading strategies was stressed and made an impact on me. Being an educator is a stressful profession and a person can get weighed down by the demands placed on them from many different directions. Staying up-to-date on current practices and conversation in the literacy world is a way to stay invigorated and keep teaching fresh. My goal as an educator is to provide the best opportunities for my students to learn and become independent readers.

A way for me to help make this happen is through participating in relevant professional development opportunities. Moving forward, it will continue to be a goal of mine as a teacher to incorporate time to read published articles and attend professional development. One way I can do this is my membership to the International Literacy Association and their publications: *The Reading Teaching Journal*, *Literacy Today*, and *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. After completing my coursework, I will also be able to provide relevant professional development opportunities for the staff I work with, to help continue to enrich the literacy practices in my own teaching setting as well.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Chapters One through Three of this capstone, along with the capstone project, worked to answer the question *How can text sets be used in a middle school social studies classroom to teach critical literacy?* Chapter One provided the background information for how I arrived at my research question. In Chapter Two the literature on the research about the three main themes of the research question including literacy in the social studies classroom, text sets, and critical literacy was examined. Chapter Three outlined how the project was created. Finally, in Chapter Four, the purpose of the project, summary of literature, project description and limitations, as well as the author's reflection were reviewed and explained in detail.

In completing this capstone project, I have grown as a literacy leader in both my school and the community of educators. The project has given me the chance to develop my ability in creating opportunities for students to build their skills as readers, while also thinking as historians in the social studies classroom. Looking to the future, it is my hope that my review of the literature and project can be used by other educators to continue to bridge the gap between the social studies classroom and reading strategies, using both the text set created for this project and other text sets yet to be developed.



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APPENDIX A  
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**Figure 1. Common Core Literacy Standards for History/Social Studies, Grades 6-8**

<b>Key Ideas and Details</b>	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1	Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2	Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.3	Identify key steps in a text’s description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g. how a bill becomes a law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).
<b>Craft and Structure</b>	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.5	Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6	Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).
<b>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</b>	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7	Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.8	Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9	Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.
<b>Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity</b>	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.10	By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

(Adapted from NGA Center &amp; CCSSO, 2018)

## Figure 2. Immigration Text Set List

Applegate, K. (2009). *Home of the brave*. New York, NY: Square Fish.

Reading Level: N/A	Text Type: Novel	ISBN: 9780312535636
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Aslanian, S. (2015, March 02). 'We are Hmong Minnesota': A 40-year journey, remembered. Retrieved from <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2015/03/02/we-are-hmong-minnesota> (including audio file linked in article)

Reading Level: N/A	Text Type: Online article	ISBN: N/A
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Cameron, L. (2010). Common threads: The Minnesota immigrant experience. *Minnesota History*, 62(3), 96-106. Retrieved from <http://www.mnhs.org/market/mhspress/minnesotahistory/xml/v62i03.xml>

Reading Level: N/A	Text Type: Journal Article	ISBN: N/A
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Carney, E. (2016). *Ellis island*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic.

Reading Level: 800 Lexile	Text Type: Secondary Source	ISBN: 9781426323416
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Cha, D., Cha, C., & Cha, N. T. (2016). *Dias story cloth*. New York: Lee & Low Books.

Reading Level: 1140 Lexile	Text Type: Picture Book	ISBN: 1880000342
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Clark, T. R., & Mueller, R. L. (Eds.). (2016). *Green card youth voices: Immigration stories from a Minneapolis high school*. Minneapolis, MN: Wise Ink Creative Publishing.

Reading Level: N/A	Text Type: Memoir Essays	ISBN: 0997496002
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Clark, T. R., & Mueller, R. L. (Eds.). (2017). *Green card youth voices: Immigration stories from a St. Paul high school*. Minneapolis, MN: Wise Ink Creative Publishing.

Reading Level: N/A	Text Type: Memoir Essays	ISBN: 1949523047
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De Capua, S. (2004). *How people immigrate*. New York, NY: Children's Press.

Reading Level: 940 Lexile	Text Type: Secondary Source	ISBN: 0516227998
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Dunbar, E. (2010, Jan 22). Comparing the Somali experience in Minnesota to other immigrant groups. *MPR News*. Retrieved from

<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2010/01/25/comparing-the-somali-experience-in-minnesota-to-other-immigrant-groups-of-immigrants->

Reading Level: N/A	Text Type: Online article	ISBN: N/A
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Gratz, A. (2017). *Refugee*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

Reading Level: 800 Lexile	Text Type: Novel	ISBN: 9780545880831
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House, S. & Vaswani, N. (2011). *Same Sun Here*. Somerville, MA.: Candlewick Press.

Reading Level: 890 Lexile	Text Type: Novel	ISBN: 0763664510
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Ibrahim, H. (2017). *From Somalia to snow; How central Minnesota became home to Somalis*. Edina, MN: Beaver's Pond Press, Inc.

Reading Level: N/A	Text Type: Secondary Source	ISBN: 1592987788
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Kenney, D. (2013). *Northern lights; The stories of Minnesota's past*. (2nd ed.) J. Cadwell, S. Hunn, K. Maijala (Eds.). Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press.

Reading Level: Grade 5/6	Text Type: Textbook	ISBN: 0873518853
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Lombard, J. (2008). *Drita: My homegirl*. London: Puffin Books.

Reading Level: 630 Lexile	Text Type: Novel	ISBN: 0142409057
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Maestro, B. (1996). *Coming to America: The story of immigration*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

Reading Level: 890 Lexile	Text Type: Picture book	ISBN: 0590441515
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Marsh, K. (2018) *Nowhere boy*. New York, NY: Roaring Brook Press.

Reading Level: Age 10-14	Text Type: Novel	ISBN: 9781250307576
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Minnesota Council of Churches Refugee Services. (2011). *This much I can tell you; Stories of courage and hope from refugees in Minnesota*. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Council of Churches

Reading Level: N/A	Text Type: Essays	ISBN: 9780984858804
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Moore, H. (2019, February 19). Readers Write: Immigration and Borders. *Star Tribune*. Retrieved from <http://www.startribune.com/readers-write-distracted-driving-conversion-therapy-immigration-and-borders-national-emergency-edina-schools-and-valentine-s-day/506013322/>

Reading Level: N/A	Text Type: Opinion Letter	ISBN: N/A
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Morales, Y. (2018). *Dreamers*. New York: Neal Porter Books/Holiday House.

Reading Level: 480 Lexile	Text Type: Picture Book	ISBN: 0823440559
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Phi, B. (2017). *A different pond*. North Mankato, MN: Picture Window Books, a Capstone imprint.

Reading Level: 620 Lexile	Text Type: Picture Book	ISBN: 1623708036
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Ringgold, F. (2016). *We came to America*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Reading Level: 430 Lexile	Text Type: Picture Book	ISBN: 0517709473
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Roberts, C. & Kai, H. (2017). *Children in our world; Refugees and migrants*. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, Inc.

Reading Level: Grade 1-4	Text Type: Picture book	ISBN: 1438050208
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Roethke, L. (2009). *Latino Minnesota*. Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press.

Reading Level: N/A	Text Type: Secondary Source	ISBN: 0873517865
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Ruurs, M., & Badr, N. A. (2016). *Stepping stones: A refugee family's story* (F. Raheem, Trans.). Custer, WA: Orca Book.

Reading Level: 480 Lexile	Text Type: Picture Book	ISBN: 9781459814905
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Sands, S. (Ed.) (2010, February). Ellis Island. *Kids Discover*, 20(2). Retrieved from <https://www.kidsdiscover.com/shop/issues/ellis-island-for-kids/>

Reading Level: 900 Lexile	Text Type: Magazine	ISBN: N/A
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Sands, S. (Ed.) (2010, March). Immigration. *Kids Discover*, 20(3). Retrieved from <https://www.kidsdiscover.com/shop/issues/immigration-for-kids/>

Reading Level: 1000 Lexile	Text Type: Magazine	ISBN: N/A
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Say, A. (2008). *Grandfather's Journey*. Boston, MA: HMH Books for Young Readers.

Reading Level: 650 Lexile	Text Type: Picture Book	ISBN: 9780547076805
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Shaw, B. (2018, January 15). Minnesota has the most refugees per capita in the U.S. Will that continue? *Pioneer Press*. Retrieved from <https://www.twincities.com/2018/01/13/the-not-so-welcome-mat-minnesota-winces-at-refugee-cutbacks/amp/>

Reading Level: N/A	Text Type: Newspaper Article	ISBN: N/A
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Tan, S. (2006). *The arrival*. New York: A.A. Levine.

Reading Level: Grades 6-8	Text Type: Graphic Novel	ISBN: 0439895294
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Teaching Tolerance Staff. (2011). *Ten Myths About Immigration*. Retrieved from <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2011/ten-myths-about-immigration>

Reading Level: N/A	Text Type: Magazine Article	ISBN: N/A
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Vang, C. Y. (2008). *Hmong in Minnesota*. Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press.

Reading Level: N/A	Text Type: Secondary Source	ISBN: 0873515986
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Yusuf, A. I. (2012). *Somalis in Minnesota*. Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press.

Reading Level: N/A	Text Type: Secondary Source	ISBN: 0873518675
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**Figure 3. Digital Resources for Immigration Text Set**

1999 This is home: Hmong in Minnesota podcast from Minnesota Public Radio

<https://www.mprnews.org/story/1999/03/12/archive-this-is-home>

Children of Immigrants Fact Sheet from the Urban Institute

<https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/low-income-working-families/projects/children-immigrants>

Fact Finder from U.S. Government Census Data

<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

Green Card Youth Voices Videos

<https://www.greencardvoices.com/>

Immigration Oral Histories Collection from Minnesota Historical Society

<http://collections.mnhs.org/ioh/>

Looking back at 40 years of Hmong Migration in Minnesota podcast from Minnesota Public Radio

<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2015/01/09/daily-circuit-hmong-minnesota>

Minnesota's Immigrants: Explore the stories of people who have immigrated to Minnesota from Minnesota Digital Library

<http://immigrants.mndigital.org/items/browse>